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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001994

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: TAMIL TIGERS NOT TERMINATING CEASEFIRE
AGREEMENT

REF: COLOMBO 1985

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Nordic monitors from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission reported to the Embassy that the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) were not withdrawing from the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement with the government. LTTE chief negotiator Tamilchelvan told them his movement wants the SLMM mission to continue as before. Norwegian peace facilitators also plan to carry on their work as normal, despite the truculent tone of LTTE head Prabhakaran's November 27 "Heroes' Day" speech. Norwegian facilitator Hanssen-Bauer arrives November 29 for a week of separate talks with the GSL and LTTE negotiators. The first relief convoy in a month reportedly reached 30,000 civilians trapped between Tamil Tiger and government forces on the Vakarai in Sri Lanka's east, also on November 29. End summary.

RUMORS OF CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT'S DEMISE EXAGGERATED

¶2. (SBU) Nordic truce monitors from the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), along with a delegation from Iceland's Foreign Ministry, spoke to chief Tamil Tiger negotiator Tamilchelvan November 28 in the LTTE de facto capital of Kilinochchi. Tamilchelvan told them that, contrary to the tone of LTTE head Prabhakaran's Heroes' Day speech (reftel), the Tigers did not want to withdraw from the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA). On the contrary, the LTTE still wants SLMM to continue its mission without changes.

¶3. (C) SLMM senior advisor Helen Olafsdottir recounted that, according to Tamilchelvan, Prabhakaran had merely meant that the Sri Lankan government's behavior had rendered the CFA useless when he called the CFA "defunct." Olafsdottir commented that although Prabhakaran's Heroes' Day speeches were always hard to decipher, the SLMM did not think this year's speech that significant. If the purpose was to rally international support, she said, it obviously failed; in

fact, the sooner we put the speech behind us and move on, the better.

NORWEGIAN PEACE FACILITATION: BUSINESS AS USUAL

14. (C) The Norwegian Embassy concurred that the Prabhakaran speech was "difficult to assess." A Norwegian PolOff thought it "clearly was not a promising development" and raised questions about the policy, intentions, and future actions of LTTE. He noted it was the first time since the peace process began that Prabhakaran has referred to an independent state. In recent Heroes' Day speeches, he had talked about "self-determination" or "self-government" instead.

15. (C) Norwegian peace process facilitator Jon Hanssen-Bauer will arrive late on November 29 for a one-week visit, his first since the last round of talks in Geneva in October. Hanssen-Bauer had deliberately waited until after the Heroes' Day speech, the Norwegian Embassy told us. This is to be a regular, "normal" visit without a special agenda: the Norwegians want to hold down expectations for this trip and will be in "listening mode." Hanssen-Bauer will also deliver the messages from the November 21 Co-Chairs meeting in Washington, however. Co-Chair Ambassadors will meet Hanssen-Bauer on December 1. After talks with GSL and other interlocutors in Colombo, Hanssen-Bauer will travel to Kilinochchi on December 5 to speak with Tamilchelvan.

RELIEF SUPPLIES REACH CIVILIANS IN VAKARAI

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16. (SBU) There was a positive development in Vakarai, where 30,000 civilians, mostly internally displaced persons (IDPs), have been trapped between an isolated group of LTTE cadres and Sri Lankan security forces for weeks. A food convoy organized by the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was reportedly able to get through on November 29 -- the first to do since October 30 -- after several previous failed attempts. (One of the difficulties was obtaining simultaneous security guarantees from both the army and the LTTE guerrillas.) The SLMM told us they had observed the convoy pass the last Sri Lankan Army checkpoint and cross in to the LTTE-held zone. The Red Cross told us later that 20 trucks with food and 40 with medicine and other supplies had gotten through. ICRC and UNHCR would continue to negotiate with the military to get the remaining trucks through the following day.

17. (C) COMMENT: It is encouraging that Tamilchelvan has so quickly backtracked on Prabhakaran's proclamation that the CFA is "defunct." However, the negotiating atmosphere is decidedly strained at present. We expect no substantive progress on a settlement until the government and the opposition UNP develop an offer to the LTTE under the terms of the MoU the two major parties have signed. This could take several weeks, at least. In the meantime, it is important that the SLMM continue its work and that the Norwegians keep the peace process on idle - lest the situation deteriorate further. As a follow-up to Army Commander Fonseka's meetings at the Defense and State Departments, Ambassador will continue to meet senior Sri Lankan government officials and counsel restraint, in particular asking the GSL to refrain from offensive moves that could further jeopardize the CFA.

BLAKE